# EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTERS AS SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: After these various remarks I think I should remind you that what I feel I most resemble at the present moment is one of those lettercarriers, who, regardless of the weather, arrives at his destination, and I imagine that all of us have a good deal of the same feeling if we've had similar experience battling airplanes the last few hours.

What I welcome about this occasion is this: I want to take this as an opportunity to clarify a few alternatives which I would like to see you seriously consider. I'm not just making this another one of those speeches, you know, that people who are in academic life are supposed to get rid of every once in a while. I would like this speech to have certain peculiar characteristics. Namely, I should like it to be a contribution to action on the part of the people present. And I'm present, too! I'm one of the people I'm talking to. Some of the things I'm going to say I shall be very curious to hear what they sound like, because, in some instances, I have not, as a matter of fact, discussed them in any public place. So it will be a pleasure to have a chance to hear some of the things that I and some of the others present will say when the time is open.

Now the problem which I am going to talk about is cryptically concealed under this mysterious title. What I'm actually going to discuss will, I think, be quite obvious by the time I have gone on for a few minutes. What I'm concerned about is a problem that is certainly old stuff to anybody who's been in the educational broadcasting business or has had any responsibility for any kind of adult education program, or any sort of public service activities in connection with any institution, educational or non-educational in the United States or elsewhere. This is the problem that all of us, I suppose, are more keenly alive to now than we were just a few years ago: how to capture the gadgets of modern society for the service of our basic moral and political ideals.

By this time, it's no news when people talk about modern civilization as inhabited by chauffeurs, as people whose mentality is that of steersmen of machines that they don't know how to construct, that they didn't design, that they didn't participate in making. In a sense, this is a world of chauffeurs living among an abundance of gadgets, learning how to push buttons and how to handle wheels and other control instruments. The famous communications revolution of which those of us who are connected with communications in any form are acutely conscious -- this famous communications revolution has given to millions of people another set of gadgets on an unparalleled scale, gadgets that permit them to listen and look at other people and gadgets that permit other people to do odd things to them. And under these circumstances, the problem becomes more obvious and more pressing than ever. What are we going to do about these gadgets? How can we effectively master them so that they can contribute to some result that's worth getting?

We're more serious about that, I suppose, in the United States now, than we've been at any time since toward the end of the 18th century when we were busy seceding from the British Empire and when we were busy undertaking to set up a more perfect Union of our own. In those days, when you read the correspondence of the Fathers, you discover that the problems which we're now talking about were matters about which they were corresponding with one another. You can't pick up the correspondence of Madison without being particularly impressed by the brilliance of what he had to say. His interplay with Jefferson and with the other leaders, is something which was freshly brought to your attention yesterday.

I think that today we are in a position to ask ourselves the same kinds of earnest questions that were asked at the end of the 18th century. Today we have the problem of a more perfect Union. There's nothing left to secede from except the globe as a whole, and nobody yet knows just how to get away from it. Consequently, the problem now is not one of secession to be followed by the putting of

the seceded parts together. Our problem in the 20th century is the how to bind men together for the achievement of positive moral and social values. The communications problem with which we are particularly concerned is but part of the bigger issue of how we handle the gadgets for all important values. Are we satisfied with our achievements up to date? Certainly no one in this room, I'm sure, would feel complacent about the way we have handled these extraordinary new instruments of communication. None of us would feel that the results which we have so far obtained are sufficiently impressive to let any of us congratulate ourselves.

What is the major discrepancy between where we would like to get and where we are now? I suppose the major discrepancy is not quantitative. It's no longer what it seemed to be at various times in the past of America when the problems seemed to be to make postal service available to people who were way out in the countryside on the frontiers. It's no longer a quantitative problem of building up a basic network for the dissemination of ideas. Today, we have a Niagara of communications coursing through the existing network of the radio, the printed press, and the rest of the channels. With this Niagara of symbols the problems are qualitative. The qualitative problem is this: how can we get into the stream of communication the materials that contribute to the basic purposes that we have in view?

I'm not going to spend time expanding what I mean by these basic purposes. The reason that I'm not going to spend much time is because all of us share American culture. In class terms, a good many of us belong to that ancient and honorable group known as the "middle classes." We also belong to the rather ancient, but not always so honorable group known as the "professional symbol-slingers!" This is true whether we get our living as teachers, or lecturers, or secular preachers, or reporters, so on through the list. We have these skills in common. We can at least select from among other people's communications those which we expedite. Some of us are basically "expediters of communication," which itself nowadays is a rather complicated skill.

So it's not necessary for me to spend much time here saying what I mean by the basic goal values that we share. We would differ, I suppose, in the words that we would employ to describe what we mean by human dignity. But I think that we would find that when we matched our labels that the words would turn out to be equivalent. I will take it for granted that we share the basic conception that we want the sort of society in America, and as widely as possible throughout the globe, which realizes human dignity in theory and in practice. And human dignity means that we realize a state of affairs in which there is very wide sharing of the basic values. For instance, a very wide sharing of the decision-making process: that's democracy in the political sense. A very wide sharing of the benefits of the enormous production potentials of modern society: that's economic democracy in the material sense.

We also believe, I think, in wide sharing of respect in the sense of abolishing discriminations. I think too, that we believe in the wide sharing of well-being in the sense of physical and mental health. I believe, too, that we are in favor of wide sharing of enlightenment, which includes access to the stream of fact and interpretation on the basis of which it is possible to arrive at intelligent judgments on public policy. I think too, that we are in substantial agreement that we are for the sharing of moral values rectitude. That is, we believe that everyone should have a sense of responsibility for so adjusting his conduct that it implements human dignity.

I think too, that we would want shared opportunities for congenial and productive interpersonal relationships with people at home and at the work place (and so on through the everyday associations of living). When we spell out our conception of human dignity we're talking about a set of human relationships that fits these

conceptions. The contrast obviously is a community in which values are concentrated in a few hands primarily on the basis of birth.

Well, as I said, I'm not going to spend time this morning outlining in detail our concrete conceptions of human dignity, because most of us will come out at about the same place. Where the problem arises is when we confront our ideal conceptions of human dignity with the existing state of facts. Consider the value closest to us here, namely, enlightenment. Our great communication system has not contributed nearly as much as it can or as it needs to contribute to public enlightenment. It's not necessary among a group of specialists to review the facts as to the discrepancy between what is wanted and what we have.

There have been a great many disciplined inquiries which have pointed out the discrepancy between what we want and what we've got. You can't interview, by any of the existing methods, an upper middle or lower class audience without being struck by the absence of elementary knowledge about the issues confronting us in public life. This means that a great many people don't know why Eisenhower is in Europe. It means that a great many people don't know what inflation is. It means that a great many people cannot connect the word "inflation" with what they themselves are doing when they spend or do not spend their paychecks. It means, too, that people do not understand and can't give a reasonable description of what productivity is. And unless you have a common conception of such a fundamental notion as productivity in talking about our economic process, you're scarcely in any position to think or talk intelligently about the difference between modern American industrial capitalism and what it was 50 years ago, or to make clear the vast contrasts between American industrial life and the older industrial patterns now found in the British Isles or in France, for example.

Turn in almost any direction and you will find that a sample audience will be unequipped with the thought-tools and the talk-tools to comprehend the fundamentals of our modern system of production. So on through the list of social processes.

How can we possibly be complacent in a situation in which these vast networks labor and bring forth mice? Our problem is how to bring the whole of communication into closer harmony with the purposes which we have in view. All right, if this is the broad diagnosis of the problem, where do we go from here?

There have for years past been ringing addresses on occasions similar to this in which people have allowed themselves, perhaps even eloquently to dilate upon the obvious. I have dilated upon the obvious without benefit of eloquence and for the sake of a running start in the direction of proposing some alternative solutions. I am not among those who believe that the problem is hopeless of solution. On the contrary, it strikes me that we are in a remarkably favorable position to make positive advances in the next few months and years in the direction indicated. There is a terrific gap between existing intentions and performances, a gap which I suggest can be overcome to a very considerable extent. Let me now begin to be more specific about indicating what is involved.

First of all, what do I need in my business as a citizen of this country? I need a concise, reliable presentation of what public officials are up to, and at the present time it is very difficult to get a concise, vivid, reliable presentation of what's going on in Washington, or of what's going on in several other major capitols of the globe even when they are accessible to us. Just think of what the situation was like when the Senate and the House were sitting. If you tried to ask yourself, "Now what's been going on here this last week in these hearings and the floor debates; what's the significance of these hearings before the Federal Communications Commission or the ICC?" So on through the list of the major federal agencies in Washington, you'd find that there was no easy place to turn to get the sort of guidance that you

would like to have. To some extent you could turn to the national interpreters, the commentators on the news. To some extent you could rely on straight news reports and to the re-processed reports in Time, Newsweek and the rest. But if you ask yourself what you would like most to know about Washington, I think that you would decide that there was a big discrepancy between what was easily at hand and what you want.

Concretely, I would like to see regularly available, a summary of the debate in the Senate and in the House which would be recorded and edited from the recordings. And I would like the editing job to be done by someone in whose integrity and prominence I had some trust. I should like also to have this semi-documentary supplemented by material selected from the most dependable sources which clarify the major issues which are being talked about.

Well, this is indeed a very modest request. The pattern of doing this is no news to anybody in this room, because I'm sure plenty of times you've confronted the problem of selective reporting of state legislative debates, or municipal councils, or similar organized groups. But at the national level somehow everybody seems to be doing this reporting -- semi-documentary and analytic in character -- and nobody seems to be doing it. It's one of those obvious things that has slipped by largely because everybody is so busy working at routine tasks that no one builds up this semi-documentary report on the Supreme Court, on the Senate, on the House, or on the major administrative agencies in the national capitol. This problem, I suspect, still requires a more satisfactory solution.

And this is not all. Anybody who is at all alive to the realities of American life knows that many of the most important decisions in America are not made in Washington. But Washington very often registers decisions which are made elsewhere. Where are the other places where the decisions are made and which might be reported in some regular way?

Well, what do you think of in this connection? Do you not think of all the great national pressure group organizations? Your estimate of how many there are depends on, as usual, on your definitions, but most studies of national pressure organizations say that there are about a thousand pressure groups of national scope with executive secretaries in Washington or New York. Most of these thousand pressure groups in this country have a formal organization of some sort. They speak in the name of memberships, and in some cases the memberships have something to do with what the pressure group representative says. In many instances, the executive in Washington or New York has a continuing board of trustees -- two or three of whom may really be interested in what is going on -- and also has an annual meeting of some sort in which his problem is to get an organization-wide endorsement of the policies he's decided that the organization should adopt.

Now this sounds as though "the pressure group guys" dictated to the membership and there's a great deal of truth in that. However, in the case of many of these organizations, the word "dictation" doesn't apply. The process is far more subtle. What often happens is that the executives figure out what policies make sense within the articulate purposes of the organization, what line of proposed legislative or administrative, formal or informal action should be endorsed at the convention, and the conveners consider these matters. They often upset the "plan".

It seems to me that we need a reporting system in this country which covers all the major pressure group conventions with the same care and intelligence that is needed to cover the Washington agencies. We need this for the major Union organizations, for the major professional organizations -- Teachers, Bar, Medicine. We need it for the principal agricultural outfits, and so on through the list of principal

organizations which are part of the enormously complex consent-developing process in American political life.

We need to know that there's a source we can turn to that concisely selects material of documentary importance and adds the kinds of clarification which I have briefly referred to.

The pressure groups are by no means the only organizations that need to be gathered into this perfected network of citizen's intelligence. We need to bring into the public eye organizations which often meet and usually make significant decisions out of sight of the community at large. I'm referring to the stockholders' meetings of the major corporations. It is the custom, nowdays, to pooh-pooh stockholders' meetings. The reason is that experience shows how often stockholders' meetings are rubber stamp operations for a tightly-held family ownership or a small managerial group. So the stockholders' meeting is largely a ritualistic hocus-pocus by which these minority groups, by going through the proper ceremonial, protect their decision-making power.

We do know that important decisions affecting employment, levels of investment and saving, for example, are made by giant corporations. As clarifiers of the public we have been singularly slow in working out procedures by which these organizations are brought into the common democratic process. The first step in democratic process is publicity. We need to focus the spotlight of interest on what these outfits are doing.

This means that it would be appropriate to arrange for the selective broadcasting, for instance, of the stockholders' meeting of U. S. Steel, of the major automobile companies--in short, of the large employers of labor and other facilities. I think that you can forsee that such selective broadcasting will cause the specialized public relations boys in each of these organizations to figure out the most congenial way to rig the stockholders' proceedings so that the selective broadcasts will put the management in the most favorable light. And there's nothing new about that. It's precisely what happens now. What is new is the process of reminding people of who some of the big names are who are responsible for policy, or at least who are some of the leading stooges of the big names. Lead Americans to ask more questions. Create a sense of familiarity with the names of organizations and persons. Eventually you construct a sentimental umbrella under which more relevant stuff can come.

This is the process by which democracy developed (in England, for example). It's a process in which centralized decision-making has first been looked at and talked about. Then the rulers get more self-conscious of their decision-making role, and more people become factors who need to be taken into account. In this way you develop an effective sharing of power. The man who controls the reporting processes is the man who's making the first fundamental step in a democratizing process.

Now this may not be successful because leaders may get afraid of democracy and proceed to establish a dictatorial setup in which they can keep themselves from scrutiny. But in this country we have a great deal of experience in the discouraging of dictatorial tendencies on the part of various self-selected Messiahs -- industrial or otherwise. And I suspect that the processes we're talking about will stimulate a more vigorous and sensible understanding of what the rich and varied decision-making process is in a vast, modern, industrialized society, so that even our conceptions of democracy will have a closer connection with the facts of our own day, rather than the verbalisms of a century back.

One important problem then is to select the pressure groups, corporations, or trade Unions. We ought to include many gatherings of the ecclesiastical sort. In the name of religion, many people make recommendations on moral and political questions, which brings them within the area of public comment and reporting.

There's a second important function which can be perfected. I have in mind the reporting of the results of scientific and scholarly investigation. These results are not necessarily dated in the same sense that January's debates in the Senate are dated. As things stand today we have an astonishing amount of relevant information developed by the several social psychological sciences -- information which is not intelligibly and vividly made clear to the community. As I shall indicate in a minute, many of these results bear directly on great questions of public policy. Let me begin by citing a few instances of technical stuff that's at hand.

First, take inflation. There have been some extremely important investigations of the factors affecting inflation. For instance, Woodleaf Thomas, in the current number of the American Economic Review writes a long review of a book on the history of financial policy in World War II. The book was written by Morgan, a key man in the Treasury in the last war, and Thomas, writing from the standpoint of the Federal Reserve Board, looks at the record from a non-treasury point of view. The most important thing in this review is that it makes very clear the principal questions that need to be settled in financing a major war effort with a minimum of immediate or eventual disruption of living standards. It is quite possible to translate this material in ways that your old Aunt Emma can understand it. Communications experts are experts on Aunt Emma's mentality, aren't they? As expert intermediaries between Aunt Emma's nephew Ph.D. and Aunt Emma their problem is to get in touch with the nephew as well as with Aunt Emma. Part of the problem is to locate the horse's mouth. (Somebody has remarked that metaphors are dangerous, so we won't take this one any farther.)

We need to set up a reporting and analyzing process by which the vast amount of big time research that's being done on important relationships is made comprehensible. It's encouraging to remember that if the stuff were not so simple, there wouldn't be so many economists.

One source of advice are the editors of the principal economic journals, and the committees of the American Economic Association. They can point out the experts, and they actually do want to reach the people at large.

Besides the vast amount of material made available by economists, there is the specialized output of political scientists. That's the academic label that I originally bore, and which I still bear in some circles; and as a political scientist, I am able to report to you that there are some things that some political scientists know of some use to somebody else. For example, a team of political scientists and historians can present important case reports on past situations in which the world was bipolarized. There have been bipolar systems in the past in which two great powers were dominant -- in Egypt, in China, and in some other places. One task of the kind of reporting that I'm advocating is to find cases from the past experience of mankind that are most useful in clarifying our present perplexities. This is the principle: Select the nearest parallels, not with the idea that one slavishly reads into the future what has been reported of the past, but rather that one alerts oneself to recognize novelties. After all, one function of science is to sensitize us to what is new. You can turn to members of the American Political Science Association and to the American Historical Association for help in choosing useful parallels.

Again, there are a good many things the sociologists know that should not be kept secret from the general public. I refer to facts about social class, for instance, about which there has recently been a growing amount of comment. What is the significance of the class structure of society? What are the important questions, definitions and tentative findings? What is the significance of class for educational and political policy in a country that aspires toward democracy? How do you keep the classes from becoming castes? And how do you break up castes with a minimum of social cost?

Well, these are the kinds of questions that the better scholars are able to throw some light on. Also the political scientists and sociologists are very much concerned with analyzing the conditions under which you get a larger unity, or in which an established unity breaks down. Since nowadays we are interested in developing a wider unity to include the free world and hopefully, at some future date, the entire globe it is important to understand unity.

Actually we could go through the list of specialized scholars whose organizations belong to the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies. The National Headquarters of these groups of course are staffed by scholars very interested in problems of the kind we're talking about.

What I've been saying on the national level plainly applies in local and regional areas. It is my impression that there are many places over this country where what I've been talking about is realized, in large measure at least. In some areas some broadcasting programs do take as their major responsibility the reporting of advances in the scholarly world that bear on the public issues. What I'm thinking about is that these examples on a local scale have not yet been developed into a vast national process.

What might be done along this line? I would like to suggest this: I believe that we've had enough experimenting in the last few decades in America to be able to say that there are specialists on the media of communication whose main concern is to serve the public interest. I believe that such specialists have been developed. I believe that the people present in this room represent such a developing speciality.

Now notice the significant features of this definition. First, specialists on the instruments of communication. Well, we know what these instruments are, and we can identify who handles which one.

The second part of the definition, a concern for public service, is more crucial than the first.

What I have been defining is an incipient profession. And I want to remind you what the word "profession" can mean. (And now a couple of brief and "cynical" footnotes to say that I am using this word in a responsible fashion and not as one of those beautiful passwords that you pin like a rose to your lapel with the expectation that it will enhance your prestige, income, or your chances of getting Foundation grants!) I am thinking of the word "profession" defined in the same way that we speak of the lawyers as constituting a profession, or the physicians, and so on.

What are the distinctive marks of a skill group that deserves to be called a profession? The essential mark is not only the acquisition of skill, not only the development of literate theories of these skills, but the demand to serve the public interest.

Now, the mark of a profession from this point of view is whether its members will turn down jobs. A rough and ready way to decide whether you've got a profession is whether people will turn down jobs because if they took the jobs they would be working against the public interest.

How do you develop a profession? Well, a profession is always developed slowly. It developed slowly as people who perform specialized operations begin to develop elaborate theories about what they do. Also many of them become alert to the aggregate impact on society of what they do and begin to feel they should themselves take responsibility for deciding the extent to which the skill benefits society or in concrete situations. Hence they evolve standards of professional conduct.

All of the apparatus that comes afterward, such as the use of community coercion in the form of license powers, and the examination requirement -- all this comes later and is relatively superficial. (In fact, I'm not even sure that licensing has any useful function in the modern world, but that's another discussion that violates a well-established bias on the part of thousands of people.)

Anyway, the essential point is to have a group with a set of skills, with an intellectual attitude toward these skills, and with a sense of responsibility for their use in the public interest. The associations gradually develop self-disciplinary procedures. They hammer out the professional code by translating their self-congratulatory rhetoric into operational systems of discipline; and this is always a slow process. (Look at the American publishers if you want a nice example of that.)

Let us summarize what we have been saying. Modern America has a vast new technical system of mass communication. But the results are far from satisfactory, when we think in terms of an enlightened citizenship. However, we do have the rudiments of a specialized group of experts on the media who are engaged in the task of clarifying for one another and for the nation how the instruments of communication can be used to serve the public interest. In a word we have the beginnings of a profession, and I hope that progress in this direction will be speeded up to fit the needs of the hour.

For one thing the profession needs a name by which it can know itself and introduce itself to the public. I do not believe that the symbol "education" is sufficiently comprehensive to serve the purpose. All of us recognize that "education" is too limited a concept in the public mind to cover all that is at stake. We are not only concerned with transmitting community tradition and basic skills to the young or to strangers. Our task is to perfect the <u>intelligence function</u>, the supplying of news and comment on the basic of which rational choices can be made on questions of public policy. In a society whose ideal goal is the dignity of man, this calls for the clarification of objectives, the considering of trends, conditions, projections and alternatives affecting the commonwealth.

Yes, more than "education" is involved. Very likely the symbol best adapted to name the profession is "public service". We are developing Public Service Communicators. In turn the public service function is specialized to broadcasting, television, and all other media. And there is a further specialization into educational activity, whether aimed at the young or the older, an activity whose essential mark is the transmitting of <u>basic tools</u>.

The public service profession does not, of course, limit itself to non-commercial clients, any more than lawyers or doctors remain "self-employed" or teach or work

only in non-profit hospitals, or civic organizations. It is not the source of the paycheck that determines the identity of a profession, but the standards of conduct, of self-determination, of discretion, which are imposed upon any employer-client.

Perhaps the time is here for the associations in the field of communication to join together in organizations, using "public service" as the essential symbol, and uniting their efforts on behalf of the mastery of our brave new world of mass communication.

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